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EDITORIAL NOTES

William T. Harris, whose recent death has brought a deep feeling of personal loss to many, made for himself a large place in the development of public education in the United States. He united two kinds of ability which are seldom combined in one man. On the one hand he was not only a scholar and lover of learning but had in unusual degree the capacity for abstract thought and persistent application to subtle analysis. At a time when there was little interest in such subjects in this country he found his way, almost unaided save by the stimulating companionship of a group of like-minded friends, into the intricacies of a profound and highly technical system of philosophy. The introduction to his exposition of Hegel contains a most interesting account of his struggles and successive steps forward in this search for light. And all through his career up to his last sickness his interest in this task was unflagging. On the other hand, Dr. Harris was an efficient administrator, deeply interested in every stage of school work, who frequently surprised his St. Louis fellow-citizens by the shrewdness and capacity for dealing with men which enabled him to embody his ideas in practical organization. The service he performed was shaped to a considerable degree by this twofold capacity. One might or might not accept the particular system of philosophy which he adopted as a satisfactory instrument for interpreting the world and life, but the very attitude of viewing education in its broadest relations, and of measuring standards and values by their deepest significance, lifted educational discussion to a higher level.

Those who knew Dr. Harris as a friend cannot forbear to recall also his unaffected, kindly nature and democratic sympathies. His conversation drew from a wide store of reading and experience, and on occasion he would often exemplify the same union of capacity already noted by carrying on a conversation at two levels for the benefit of children present, keeping them interested by asides and illustrations so that they felt included as genuinely as the older members of the circle.

Most men with such learning and tastes are brought into the service of universities. It has meant much for the dignity of public-school work that such a scholar and man remained in it, and was willing to continue in a public office so ridiculously underpaid and so inadequately supported as that of Commissioner of Education. With Henry Barnard, whose enthusiasm and sacrifices for educational progress established the office, he will have a permanent place in the respect and admiration of those who have known them or their work.

J. H. T.

In recent numbers of the *School Review* the writer has called attention in brief editorial notes to the chaotic and critical condition of our American secondary education. These notes were penned under the stress of emotional reaction against a situation that is fast becoming intolerable for anyone who really wants to do something, but the views expressed represent slowly-formed and deliberate convictions and not the opinion of the moment. If the management of the *School Review* has the temerity to grant me the hospitality of the editorial page I am willing to try to state briefly within the course of the present year what I believe the essential features of the present situation to be.

We are familiar with the phrase, the problems of secondary education. I may venture to classify these problems as inherent and natural on the one hand, and as artificial and superimposed on the other.

**THE CASE OF
THE SECONDARY
SCHOOL** The problem of the slow student, of the rapidly-growing adolescent boy, of language teaching, of fatigue in school work, and many others of the sort are in the nature of the case. We have been working at some of them a long time and are just beginning to sense the existence of others. But they will continue to be problems for secondary-school teachers as long as there are secondary schools. To be sure, we shall partially solve them and vastly improve the technique of our art or make it into a real science, but the solution will be at the most a progressive one. But here are other problems that are not natural in the sense that they may conceivably be eliminated from the situation. They have a historical explanation and cause and to this extent are, if you please, natural. But they are not inherent in the nature of the pupils individually or socially. We can conceive a changed situation in which they would not exist. Such an artificial problem with its historical causes I wish briefly to set forth as the *problem of problems* for present secondary education; this is the problem of elbow-room, a fair chance to work and to be at the real business of the secondary school. Unless this can be got, real constructive and scientific effort in secondary education in this generation must be dismissed as impracticable.

To drop all ambiguous metaphors, the imperative and insistent problem of the present is, how can the secondary school be turned over to those who study it most and know it best, that is, to the principals and teachers of these schools? In whose hands, pray, are these schools, it may be asked, if not the teachers' hands? Let the teacher answer. He will tell you that he is only under orders, that his business is to carry out commands efficiently, but that the decision as to *what* he is to do, or *why* he is to do it, is in the hands of others. You ask him who these others are and, if he has allowed himself to think about the situation, he will answer, the colleges and learned societies and associations. Think of an institution trying to

come to self-consciousness and self-mastery that it may find the real purpose and meaning of its work when the control is wielded from the outside! This is the old question of the college dominating the high school, is it not? Yes and no. Yes, if it is asked whether the colleges and associations do dominate the secondary schools—they do most assuredly. No, if it is asked if the harmfulness of this domination lies in the prescribing of specific studies, definite amounts, or totals of entrance units. This prescription is in itself a great and intolerable interference. But the fundamental harm lies in the fact that this external control prevents the real problems of secondary education from emerging and consequently from coming to anything like an approximate solution. The real problems of secondary education are, *what* the pupils should do and study to secure the largest development and growth, *when* and *how* they should pursue their studies, and what are the criteria of success in the pursuit of these studies. Can anyone doubt that on the whole these questions have been settled beforehand for every secondary-school teacher who has entered on his work in this country? There is nothing of novelty in this view. It has been voiced in one form or other countless times. The wonder is that something has not been done to secure a chance to attack these real problems. The present situation has a historical origin, an exposition of which may help somewhat in the understanding of the forces which have created and still maintain it. A succeeding editorial will be devoted to such an exposition. W. B. O.

The Committee on Educational Progress of the Harvard Teachers' Association is desirous of obtaining data as to the most notable and significant advances in education. Readers of the *School Review* are invited to co-operate. The complete report on this investigation will be published in the May number of the *School Review*. Two previous annual reports of this committee have appeared in the *School Review* (Vol. XVI, 1908, pp. 296-319, and Vol. XVII, 1909, pp. 289-329). These reports have furnished valuable surveys of contemporary educational conditions, especially as to new developments and growth. With a view to obtaining data in regard to a wide variety of recent movements and tendencies in education, the committee has prepared the following suggestive list of topics:

THE REPORT OF
THE HARVARD
COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATIONAL
PROGRESS

PROGRESS IN EDUCATION 1909-10

SUGGESTIVE LIST OF TOPICS

I. *Extension of Scope in Education.*

a) Physical Education.

(Medical Inspection, Nurses, Athletics, Playgrounds, and the Like.)

b) Vocational Education.

(Industrial, Commercial, Agricultural Schools, Vocational Work in Common Schools.)

- c) Moral and Religious Education.
- d) Education with reference to Special Conditions.
(Immigrants, Truants, Juvenile Courts, Defectives.)
- e) The School and the Public.
(Lecture Courses, Wider Use of School Property, Co-operation of Lay Bodies, Evening Schools, Continuation Schools.)
- f) New School Aims and Subjects.
(Gardens, Vacation Work, Social Education, School Grounds.)

II. *Organization and Administration.*

- a) Relation of Teachers to School Officers.
(Faculty Organization, School Councils.)
- b) Qualification and Status of the Teacher.
(Professional Training, Salaries, Pensions, Professional Growth, Promotion, Standing and Activity in the Community.)
- c) Articulation of the School System.
(Kindergarten and Grades, Grades and High School, High School and College.)
- d) The School Programme.
(Promotions, Sessions, Play Time, Study Time.)

III. *Method.*

- a) Instruction.
(Attention to the Individual, Group Work Devices, and Special Methods.)
- b) The Learner.
(The Laboratory Principle; Constructive Activity in School Work; Direct Observation of Real Data, Group Work, Individual Investigation, Library Work.)
- c) The Subject.
(Organization of Teaching Material, Selection of Typical Cases and Problems, Standard Books, etc.)

IV. *Legislation.*

(What to your mind has been the most significant advance in education?)

Data bearing on any of these topics should be sent to Mr. James E. Downey, High School of Commerce, Worthington Street, Boston, Mass.

W. C. G.